

## **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action**

**Adoption:** The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted on June 25, 1993 by consensus by the representatives of the 171 States attending the World Conference on Human Rights and subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 1993.

### **Summary information**

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was the main outcome of the World Conference on Human Rights held in 1993. The Declaration affirms the commitment of all States to fulfill their obligations with respect to the principles of human rights, reaffirms that human rights are the birthright of all human beings and emphasizes that international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for the full achievement of the purposes of the United Nations.

There were several key achievements of the Declaration, including:

- the affirmation of the right to development as a fundamental human right and the recognition of the interdependency of democracy, development and respect for human rights;
- the recommendation to the General Assembly to establish a High Commissioner for Human Rights for the promotion and protection of all human rights;
- the recommendation that the General Assembly proclaim an international decade of the world's indigenous peoples; and
- the push for early ratification and effective implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* as well as the speedy ratification of other human rights instruments and the avoidance of the use of reservations with respect to those treaties.

The Declaration calls for increased coordination of human rights within the United Nations system and requests the Secretary-General and the General Assembly take immediate steps to substantially increase the financial resources for the human rights programme and to strengthen the United Nations Centre for Human Rights to assure adequate means for the system of thematic and country rapporteurs, experts, working groups and treaty bodies. At the same time, the Declaration recognizes the important roles played by national institutions, "regional arrangements" and non-governmental organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Declaration makes recommendations and requests on a number of pressing human rights issues including racism, torture and enforced disappearance and the rights of minorities, indigenous peoples, migrant workers, women, children and disabled persons.

Recommendations are also made for additional measures to strength human rights including a new programme within the United Nations to help States build adequate national structures to protect human rights and to maintain of the rule of law. There are also recommendations with respect to human rights education and implementation and monitoring methods.

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## History

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was the main outcome of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna, Austria from June 14 to June 25, 1993. The Declaration marked “the culmination of a long process of review and debate over the current status of human rights machinery in the world.”

The first International Conference on Human Rights had taken place in Teheran, Iran in 1968 to review progress made in the twenty years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That conference affirmed “its faith in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments in this field” and urged “all peoples and governments to dedicate themselves to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to redouble their efforts to provide for all human beings a life consonant with freedom and dignity and conducive to physical, mental, social and spiritual welfare.”

In 1989 the General Assembly called for the convening of a second world meeting to again review progress made in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to identify obstacles and ways in which they might be overcome.” In 1990 the General Assembly formally decided to convene a World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. At the same time the General Assembly established a Preparatory Committee, open to all States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies, with the participation of observers, “to make proposals for the consideration of the General Assembly regarding the agenda, date, duration, venue of and participation in the Conference, preparatory meetings and activities at the international, regional and national levels.”

In 1992 the General Assembly devised a provisional agenda for the World Conference on Human Rights. It included:

- Commemoration of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People;
- General debate on the progress made in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on the identification of obstacles to further progress in this area and ways in which they can be overcome;

- Consideration of the relationship between development, democracy and the universal enjoyment of all human rights, keeping in view the interrelationship and indivisibility of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.
- Consideration of contemporary trends in and new challenges to the full realization of all human rights of women and men, including those of persons belonging to vulnerable groups; and
- Recommendations for:
  - Strengthening international cooperation in the field of human rights in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and with international human rights instruments; Ensuring the universality, objectivity and non-selectivity of the consideration of human rights issues;
  - Enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations activities and mechanisms; and
  - Securing the necessary financial and other resources for United Nations activities in the area of human rights.

The preparatory process included four Preparatory Committee meetings and three regional meetings – in Tunis, San José and Bangkok – as well as informal meetings in Europe and North America and the scores of satellite meetings throughout the world. At its final meeting, the Preparatory Committee “prepared a draft final document with which the conference, hosted by the Austrian Government in Vienna, began its work and final negotiations.”

Then, in June 1993, some “7,000 participants, including academics, treaty bodies, national institutions and representatives of more than 800 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), two thirds of them at the grass-roots level, gathered in Vienna to review and profit from their shared experiences”. The major achievement of the conference was the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action by the representatives of the 171 States attending.

## **Key Provisions**

The text of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is divided into three main sections: first a preamble that provides the context in which it was adopted; next, a section reaffirming the commitment of all States to the fulfill their obligations with respect to human rights; and finally, a section containing many recommendations and requests for strengthening human rights. There is some overlap among the three sections, with similar language appearing in more than one.

### *Preamble*

The preamble to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action provides the context in which it was adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. In the preamble, the World Conference affirms the commitment to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights along with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural

Rights and states that “the Conference affords a unique opportunity to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the international human rights system and of the machinery for the protection of human rights, in order to enhance and thus promote a fuller observance of those rights, in a just and balanced manner.” Also in the preamble, the World Conference calls “upon the peoples of the world and all States Members of the United Nations to rededicate themselves to the global task of promoting and protecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms so as to secure full and universal enjoyment of these rights” and emphasizes the need “to take new steps forward in the commitment of the international community with a view to achieving substantial progress in human rights endeavours by an increased and sustained effort of international cooperation and solidarity.”

### *Commitments*

The second section of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action starts by affirming the solemn commitment of all States to fulfill their obligations with respect to the principles of human rights that have been developed since the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations. It then reaffirms that “[h]uman rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of Governments” and emphasizes that “enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for the full achievement of the purposes of the United Nations.”

The Declaration next addresses the right to self-determination, declaring that “[a]ll peoples have the right of self-determination” and that “[b]y virtue of that right they freely determine their political status, and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” Furthermore, it “recognizes the right of peoples to take any legitimate action, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to realize their inalienable right of self-determination” and asserts that “the denial of the right of self-determination as a violation of human rights”. Balancing this, the Declaration adds that “this shall not be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair... the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and thus possessed of a Government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction of any kind.”

Also emphasized is the need for effective international measures to guarantee and monitor the implementation of human rights standards and to provide effective legal protection of human rights for people under foreign occupation.

One of the key achievements of the Declaration is considered to be the affirmation that the right to development is “a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights” and that “democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing”. The international community is asked to support the strengthening and promotion of all three concepts and cooperate to eliminate obstacles to development. Further in support of the

right to development, the Declaration addresses potential environmental concerns associated with development and calls upon “all States to adopt and vigorously implement existing conventions relating to the dumping of toxic and dangerous products and waste.” The Declaration also calls upon the international community “to make all efforts to help alleviate the external debt burden of developing countries, in order to supplement the efforts of the Governments of such countries to attain the full realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of their people.”

In addition, this section of the Declaration:

- identifies as a priority task the “speedy and comprehensive elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”;
- presses the international community to take the necessary steps “to enhance cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism”;
- urges “Governments, institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their efforts for the protection and promotion of human rights of women” and girls and to eliminate gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking;
- reaffirms the importance of the promotion and protection of the human rights of minorities, of indigenous peoples and of vulnerable groups such as migrant workers;
- urges the early ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and then its effective implementation;
- reaffirms the right of everyone “to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution, as well as the right to return to one’s own country”;
- identifies the need for a comprehensive approach by the international community “to address the root causes and effects of movements of refugees and other displaced persons, the strengthening of emergency preparedness and response mechanisms [and] the provision of effective protection and assistance; and
- affirms that “extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity” and that both must be ended.

The Declaration also urges the universal ratification of all human rights treaties and that States avoid the use of reservations with respect to those treaties as far as possible. It emphasizes that every State “should provide an effective framework of remedies to redress human rights grievances or violations”, that “institutions concerned with the administration of justice should be properly funded” and that United Nations “make use of special programmes of advisory services on a priority basis for the achievement of a strong and independent administration of justice.”

In the Declaration, grave concern is expressed about massive human rights violations in the form of genocide, ethnic cleansing and the systematic rape of women in war situations as well as “continuing human rights violations in all parts of the world in disregard of standards as contained in international human rights instruments and international humanitarian law and about the lack of sufficient and effective remedies for the victims.” It then “calls upon States and all parties to armed conflicts strictly to observe international humanitarian law, as set forth in the Geneva Conventions of 1949

and other rules and principles of international law, as well as minimum standards for protection of human rights, as laid down in international conventions.”

The Declaration also calls upon States:

- “to refrain from any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that creates obstacles to trade relations among States and impedes the full realization of the human rights ... in particular the rights of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, including food and medical care, housing and the necessary social services;
- not to use food as a tool for political pressure; and
- to recognize the importance of human rights education to “promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly relations between the nations and all racial or religious groups and encourage the development of United Nations activities in pursuance of these objectives.”

The Declaration also recognizes the important roles played by:

- “national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular in their advisory capacity to the competent authorities, their role in remedying human rights violations, in the dissemination of human rights information, and education in human rights;
- “regional arrangements” in the promotion and protection of human rights; and
- “non-governmental organizations in the promotion of all human rights and in humanitarian activities at national, regional and international levels” and states that the NGOs “should be free to carry out their human rights activities, without interference, within the framework of national law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

Finally, this section of the Declaration “encourages the increased involvement of the media, for whom freedom and protection should be guaranteed within the framework of national law.”

### *Recommendations and Requests*

#### a) Increased Coordination

The first set of recommendations and requests in this third section of the Declaration deals with increased coordination of human rights within the United Nations system. All United Nations organs, bodies and the specialized agencies whose activities deal with human rights are urged “to cooperate in order to strengthen, rationalize and streamline their activities, taking into account the need to avoid unnecessary duplication.”

Furthermore, it is recommended that human rights officers be assigned “to regional offices of the United Nations Organization with the purpose of disseminating information and offering training and other technical assistance in the field of human rights upon the request of concerned Member States.”

The Declaration recognizes the need for adequate resources to fund activities at the United Nations in support of human rights and “requests the Secretary-General and the General Assembly to take immediate steps to increase substantially the resources for the human rights programme from within the existing and future regular budgets of the United Nations, and to take urgent steps to seek increased extrabudgetary resources.”

Specific increased support, both in terms of finances and human resources, is requested for the United Nations Centre for Human Rights\* to strengthen that body. The Centre is seen as playing an important role “in coordinating system-wide attention for human rights” and “should be assured adequate means for the system of thematic and country rapporteurs, experts, working groups and treaty bodies.”

Another key achievement of the Declaration is the recommendation to the General Assembly, as a matter of priority, to consider the establishment of “a High Commissioner for Human Rights for the promotion and protection of all human rights.”

#### b) Equality, dignity and tolerance

The second set of recommendations and requests in this section of the Declaration deal with issues such as racism, torture and enforced disappearance and the rights of minorities, indigenous peoples, migrant workers, women, children and disabled persons.

With respect to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, the Declaration:

- urges all Governments “to take immediate measures ... to prevent and combat all forms and manifestations of racism, xenophobia or related intolerance, where necessary by enactment of appropriate legislation, including penal measures, and by the establishment of national institutions to combat such phenomena”;
- appeals to all States parties to the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* to declare that it recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals within its jurisdiction claiming to be victims of a violation by that State Party of any of the rights set forth in the Convention;
- invites all States “to put into practice the provisions of the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*” (1981) and to “take all appropriate measures ... to counter intolerance and related violence based on religion or belief, recognizing that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion”; and
- calls on all States “to take immediate measures ... to combat the practice of ethnic cleansing to bring it quickly to an end” and to bring those legally responsible to justice.

With respect to persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, the Declaration:

- “urges States and the international community to promote and protect the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in accordance with the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*” (1992) including “facilitation of their full participation in all aspects of the political, economic, social, religious and cultural life of society and in the economic progress and development in their country”; and
- “calls upon the Centre for Human Rights to provide, at the request of Governments concerned ... qualified expertise on minority issues and human rights, as well as on the prevention and resolution of disputes, to assist in existing or potential situations involving minorities.”

With respect to indigenous people, the Declaration:

- “urges States to ensure the full and free participation of indigenous people in all aspects of society, in particular in matters of concern to them”;
- “calls on the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to complete the drafting of a declaration on the rights of indigenous people” and “recommends that advisory services and technical assistance programmes within the United Nations system respond positively to requests by States for assistance which would be of direct benefit to indigenous people”; and
- “recommends that the General Assembly proclaim an international decade of the world's indigenous people, to begin from January 1994, including action-orientated programmes, to be decided upon in partnership with indigenous people.”

With respect to migrant workers, the Declaration:

- “urges all States to guarantee the protection of the human rights of all migrant workers and their families” and “invites States to consider ... signing and ratifying, at the earliest possible time, the *International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.”

With respect to the equal status and human rights of women, the Declaration:

- “urges the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights and that this be a priority for Governments and for the United Nations” and “underlines the importance of the integration and full participation of women as both agents and beneficiaries in the development process”;
- “stresses the importance of working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, the elimination of all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation and trafficking in women, the elimination of gender bias in the administration of justice and the eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and religious extremism” and “calls upon the General Assembly to adopt the draft declaration on violence against women”;
- “urges the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, both hidden and overt” and requests that the United Nations encourage the universal ratification by all States of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* by 2000 and requests the Commission on the Status of Women and the

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women “examine the possibility of introducing the right of petition through the preparation of an optional protocol to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*”;

- “urges Governments and regional and international organizations to facilitate the access of women to decision-making posts and their greater participation in the decision-making process”; and
- supports the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to consider the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women.

With respect to the rights of the child, the Declaration:

- urges “universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by 1995 and the universal signing of the *World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action* adopted by the World Summit for Children (1990), as well as their effective implementation” and urges States to withdraw reservations with respect to the Convention;
- urges all States to place priority on “reducing infant and maternal mortality rates, reducing malnutrition and illiteracy rates and providing access to safe drinking water and to basic education” and to take effective action against female infanticide, harmful child labour, sale of children and organs, child prostitution, child pornography and other forms of sexual abuse; and
- supports measures to protect and facilitate assistance to children in war zones.

With respect to the ideal of freedom from torture, the Declaration:

- “reaffirms that under human rights law and international humanitarian law, freedom from torture is a right which must be protected under all circumstances, including in times of internal or international disturbance or armed conflicts” and “urges all States to put an immediate end to the practice of torture and eradicate this evil forever through full implementation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as well as the relevant conventions”;
- “stresses the importance of further concrete action within the framework of the United Nations with the view to providing assistance to victims of torture and ensuring more effective remedies for their physical, psychological and social rehabilitation;
- “reaffirms that efforts to eradicate torture should, first and foremost, be concentrated on prevention and, therefore, calls for the early adoption of an optional protocol to the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, which is intended to establish a preventive system of regular visits to places of detention”; and
- requests States “abrogate legislation leading to impunity for those responsible for grave violations of human rights such as torture and prosecute such violations, thereby providing a firm basis for the rule of law.”

With respect to enforced disappearances, the Declaration:

- “calls upon all States to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent, terminate and punish acts of enforced disappearance”; and

- “reaffirms that it is the duty of all States, under any circumstances, to make investigations whenever there is reason to believe that an enforced disappearance has taken place on a territory under their jurisdiction and, if allegations are confirmed, to prosecute its perpetrators.”

With respect to the rights of disabled persons, the Declaration:

- “reaffirms that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and thus unreservedly include persons with disabilities” and states that people “with disabilities should be guaranteed equal opportunity through the elimination of socially determined barriers ... which exclude or restrict full participation in society”; and
- “calls upon the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to adopt the draft standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.”

#### c) Cooperation, development and strengthening of human rights

The third set of recommendations and requests in this section of the Declaration deal with means to strengthen human rights. These measures include:

- giving special emphasis to measures “to assist in the strengthening and building of institutions relating to human rights, strengthening of a pluralistic civil society and the protection of groups which have been rendered vulnerable” by providing, upon the request of Governments, assistance for the conduct of free and fair elections and for “strengthening of the rule of law, the promotion of freedom of expression and the administration of justice, and to the real and effective participation of the people in the decision-making processes”;
- strengthening the advisory and technical assistance services of the Centre for Human Rights including “the implementation of coherent and comprehensive plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights” aimed at “strengthening the institutions of human rights and democracy, the legal protection of human rights, training of officials and others, broad-based education and public information to promote respect for human rights”;
- a recommendation that “a comprehensive programme be established within the United Nations in order to help States in the task of building and strengthening adequate national structures which have a direct impact on the overall observance of human rights and the maintenance of the rule of law” to be coordinated by the Centre for Human Rights and a request that the Secretary-General “submit proposals to the United Nations General Assembly, containing alternatives for the establishment, structure, operational modalities and funding of the proposed programme”; and
- urging formulation, for early consideration by the United Nations General Assembly, of comprehensive and effective measures to eliminate obstacles to the implementation and realization of the *Declaration on the Right to Development* and recommending that non-governmental organizations active in development and/or human rights be enabled to play a major role on the national and international levels in the activities related to the right to development;

#### d) Human rights education

The fourth set of recommendations and requests in this section of the Declaration deal with human rights education. The Declaration:

- “calls on all States and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings” and indicates that human rights education “should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, as set forth in international and regional human rights instruments, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights”;
- “recommends that States develop specific programmes and strategies for ensuring the widest human rights education and the dissemination of public information, taking particular account of the human rights needs of women”; and
- urges consideration of “proclamation of a United Nations decade for human rights education in order to promote, encourage and focus these educational activities.”

#### e) Implementation and monitoring methods

The fifth set of recommendations and requests in this section of the Declaration deal with implementation and monitoring methods with respect to human rights. The Declaration:

- “urges Governments to incorporate standards as contained in international human rights instruments in domestic legislation and to strengthen national structures, institutions and organs of society which play a role in promoting and safeguarding human rights”;
- “encourages the strengthening of cooperation between national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, particularly through exchanges of information and experience, as well as cooperation with regional organizations and the United Nations”;
- “recommends to the human rights treaty bodies, to the meetings of chairpersons of the treaty bodies and to the meetings of States parties that they continue to take steps aimed at coordinating the multiple reporting requirements and guidelines for preparing State reports under the respective human rights conventions and study the suggestion that the submission of one overall report on treaty obligations undertaken by each State would make these procedures more effective and increase their impact”;
- “recommends that the States parties to international human rights instruments, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should consider studying the existing human rights treaty bodies and the various thematic mechanisms and procedures with a view to promoting greater efficiency and effectiveness through better coordination of the various bodies, mechanisms and procedures, taking into account the need to avoid unnecessary duplication and overlapping of their mandates and tasks”;
- “recommends that the Commission on Human Rights examine the possibility for better implementation of existing human rights instruments at the international and regional levels and encourages the International Law Commission to continue its work on an international criminal court”;

- “appeals to States which have not yet done so to accede to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Protocols thereto, and to take all appropriate national measures, including legislative ones, for their full implementation”;
- asks all States to cooperate fully with the procedures and mechanisms of the system of “special procedures, rapporteurs, representatives, experts and working groups of the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities”; and
- recommends that there be “a system of indicators to measure progress in the realization of the rights set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” and asserts that there needs to be “a concerted effort to ensure recognition of economic, social and cultural rights at the national, regional and international levels.”

f) The last set of recommendations and requests in this section of the Declaration comprise:

- a recommendation that “the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and other organs and agencies of the United Nations system related to human rights consider ways and means for the full implementation, without delay, of the recommendations contained in the present Declaration, including the possibility of proclaiming a United Nations decade for human rights” and a recommendation “that the Commission on Human Rights annually review the progress towards this end”; and
- a request that the Secretary-General, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1998], invite “all States, all organs and agencies of the United Nations system related to human rights, to report to him on the progress made in the implementation of the present Declaration and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, through the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council” and an invitation to regional and national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations to “present their views to the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of the present Declaration.”

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\*With respect to the Centre for Human Rights, it should be noted that after the General Assembly established the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1994, the first Commissioner’s office was located within the Centre for Human Rights but the Commissioner had no clear oversight responsibility for the Centre. After 1997, when Mary Robinson assumed the post as High Commissioner for Human Rights, her office and the Centre for Human Rights were merged to form the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights.

## **Canada’s Commitments and Responsibilities**

Canada participated in the development of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and was among the countries adopting it, at both the World Conference on Human Rights and subsequently the United Nations General Assembly.

### **International Monitoring and Implementation**

In 1996, the General Assembly adopted a resolution ([A/RES/51/118](#)) that included a request for “the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights and other organs and bodies of the United Nations system related to human rights to take further action with a view to the full implementation of all the recommendations of the Conference” and noted the intention of “the High Commissioner to invite all States and all organs and agencies of the United Nations system related to human rights to carry out a thorough evaluation of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action” as part of the 1998 five-year review requested in the Declaration (see above).

In another resolution in 1997 [[A/RES/52/148](#)], the General Assembly called upon all States to contribute to the five-year review and requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to present an interim report to the Commission on Human Rights and a final report to the General Assembly on the progress made in the implementation of the Declaration.

The High Commissioner submitted the interim report to the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1998/104 – unavailable on UN website). The Commission also received contributions from Governments, UN organizations and other organizations and in April 1998 prepared a report (E/CN.4/RES/1998/78) titled *Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. In that report, the Commission:

- requested “the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the General Assembly, and other organs and bodies of the United Nations system related to human rights to take further action with a view to the full implementation of all the recommendations of the Conference”;
- stressed “the need to give particular attention to the human rights of women and the girl child in the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, taking into account that gender mainstreaming is a key strategy for achieving equality between women and men and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women”; and
- urged “all States and the United Nations system to give widespread publicity to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in particular in the context of the public information and human rights education activities for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including through training programmes, human rights education and public information, in order to promote increased awareness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The General Assembly in December 1998 solemnly declared its commitment to the fulfillment of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and reaffirmed that “the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action continues to constitute a solid foundation

for further action and initiatives by States, the United Nations and other relevant intergovernmental bodies and organizations, as well as concerned national institutions and non-governmental organizations”. It called upon “all States to take further action with a view to the full realization of all human rights for all in the light of the recommendations of the World Conference on Human Rights.”

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action continues to be viewed as “landmark in the history of the United Nations” with particular emphasis on its role in the creation of the position of High Commissioner for Human Rights, its support for the creation of the International Criminal Court, its unequivocal support for the rights of women and its insistence on the equal importance both of civil and political rights and of economic, social and cultural rights. It has also led to the “world-wide recognition of national human rights institutions as key independent promoters of human rights.”

## **References**

Human Rights Day 2013

World Conference on Human Rights, 14-25 June 1993, Vienna, Austria

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General Assembly Resolution A/RES/51/118

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/52/148

Comprehensive implementation and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action – UN Commission on Human Rights

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/166

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action